DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 026 953 HE 000 315

By-Flacks, Richard
Student Power and the New Left: The Role of SDS.
American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C.
Pub Date Sep 68
Note-34p.; Paper presented at annual meeting of American Psychological Association, San Francisco, California, September 1968.
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.80
Descriptors-*Activism, Administrator Attitudes, *Higher Education, Political Attitudes, Racism, Social Attitudes, *Social Change, *Student Attitudes, Student Motivation, *Student Organizations
Identifiers-*Students for a Democratic Society

As the target of student protests has changed from the Southern sheriff to the university administrator, attitudes of educators and the public have hardened. Today academic liberals enunciate the view that most protesters are sincere and idealistic but that there is a small band of nihilistic revolutionaries dedicated to destroying the university. At the center, it's said, is SDS. The author's experience as a founder and national officer of SDS, as a researcher on the social-psychological roots of student protest, and as a college teacher are drawn upon in dealing with the actual motives and attitudes of SDS. Recent studies on student activists are remarkably convergent, particularly in their finding that student activists are much more closely linked to academic life and intellectuality than their nonactivist peers. The history of the student movement from the late fifties provides some of the answers to why radical students, who have strong commitments to education, have selected the university as a major target for disruption. The primary concern of SDS has always been social reconstruction, and disillusionment with the university because of its irrelevance to basic human questions and undemocratic character was expressed at its founding. However, the history clearly indicates that student radicalism did not begin as, nor have as its major focus, an attack on the universities. SDS's present position is a direct outgrowth of student experiences in the university and outside society. (JS)

ED 026922

STUDENT POWER AND THE NEW LEFT:

THE ROLE OF SDS

Richard Flacks
Department of Sociology
University of Chicago

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

HE 000 315

Student Power and the New Left: The Role of SDS*

Richard Flacks
Department of Sociology
University of Chicago

Only ten years ago, liberal educators were mainly worried about the political apathy and privatism of their students; their "coolness" in the face of national and international crisis and, indeed, toward ideas in general. Hardly anyone was not surprised when, with the advent of the Sixties, thousands of white students, responding to the direct action of black youth, began to engage themselves in acts of protest against injustices and policies toward which they had previously displayed indifference. The first waves of student protest met with quite general approval, since they signified the end of a decade of political stagnation and outright fear. Listen, for example, to the Governor of California, speaking in 1961, expressing quite directly the mood of those years: "I say, Thank God for the spectacle of students picketing--even when they are picketing me at Sacramento and I think they are wrong, for students protesting and Freedom Riding,...going out to the fields with our migratory workers, and marching off to jail with our segregated Negroes. At least we're getting somewhere. The colleges have become bootcamps for citizenship and citizen-leaders are marching out of them. For a while it will be hard on us as administrators. Some students are going to be wrong and some people will want to deny them the right to make mistakes...But let us stand up and be proud of our students."[1]

---

* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, September, 1968, San Francisco.

Four and a half years later to the day, the same Governor Pat Brown was sending state police to the campus of the University of California to drag 800 students off to jail, because they had taken control of the Administration Building in an effort to secure their right to organize on the campus the very kinds of activity the Governor had formerly celebrated. Since Berkeley, of course, public attitudes toward student protest have greatly hardened, including the attitudes of liberal educators and administrators.

In the absence of any systematic studies, it is hard to know just what stereotypes are most prevalent in the general populace concerning student protest. One supposes that the popular view contains a melange of images: bearded, drug crazed beatniks; fuzzy-minded dupes; hard-eyed communist conspirators; pampered, rich kids; misguided youthful idealists. A minority of unknown size (but maybe larger than usually believed) has more favorable impressions.

Those in the educational Establishment, who are charged with managing the system, and who are closer to the scene, and therefore presumably somewhat better informed have, it appears, a somewhat more sophisticated and differentiated understanding of the student movement. If, at an earlier stage, they were prone to a rather nervous approbation of student dissent, their attitudes nowadays are considerably more hostile; no doubt because the thrust of student protest is directed increasingly at themselves rather than Southern sheriffs. The new view, increasingly enunciated by college administrators and other academic liberals, describes the majority of student activists as sincere, serious, idealistic, and urges the academic establishment to accommodate itself to change, so as to offset the further "alienation" of masses of students. On the other hand, the sophisticated argument goes, there is in

the midst of the student body a small band of dedicated extremist-anarchist-nihilist revolutionaries whose purpose is the destruction of the university. And at the center of this fraction, so it is increasingly being said, is the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). If SDS and its ilk are bent on destroying the university (and Mr. J. Edgar Hoover has recently stated that SDS is second only to the Communist Party in its subversive potential), then the usually unstated conclusion presumably would be that something must be done to isolate, repress or eliminate SDS. And, indeed, my personal feeling is that this is one option which academic and public authorities are likely to be reaching for in the coming months.

It may, therefore, be of some relevance to examine the actual motivations and attitudes of SDS activists with respect to the university. In so doing, I will be drawing on three sets of personal experiences. The first involves the fact that, as a graduate student at the University of Michigan, I participated in the founding of SDS in the early 1960's, served for several years as a national officer of the organization, and still retain my SDS membership. Second, I have for the past three years been engaged in systematic research on the social-psychological roots of student protest. This work has principally involved several studies of the attitudes and personal histories of a variety of samples of student activists and non-activists.[2] Finally, I have come at this problem, not only as an activist and as a sociologist, but also as a college teacher who believes in the "life of the mind" and wants the university to be a place where that kind of life can freely flourish.

Drawing on these experiences then I want to sketch what I believe to be SDS relationship to campus rebellions. In so doing I will not be

attempting a description or analysis of SDS in its totality. A full understanding of SDS and the "new left" from a historical, political or organizational point of view would require a focus rather different from the one taken here. The story I want to tell is more circumscribed and deals almost exclusively with the way in which SDS has interacted with the university as an institution.

In the past few years, several research groups have gathered data concerning the characteristics and attitudes of activist students. Such studies include surveys at Berkeley, studies by Westby and Braungart comparing SDSers with conservative students, studies by our Chicago group of a variety of activist and non-activist samples.[3] These studies are remarkably convergent in their findings and particularly about one point. Student activists, when compared with other students, are more closely linked to academic life than their non-activist peers. The unusual closeness of the activists to the university can be illustrated in a variety of ways:

1. Activists tend to have parents who have attained very advanced levels of education. Activists' fathers are overwhelmingly college graduates and to a very great extent they are men with advanced professional or academic degrees. More unusual, however, is the fact that most studies indicate that the mothers of activists are at least college graduates. Moreover, the parents of activists have occupations which derive directly from their high educational attainment--they tend, overwhelmingly, to be doctors, lawyers, professors, teachers, social workers--professionals rather than businessmen, bureaucrats, or workers. Student protesters are recruited disproportionately and predominantly from the ranks of the children of the educated middle class rather than any other stratum. To a very great extent the student movement, especially its activist core, consists of young people whose

personalities, interests and life styles are a function of the fact that their parents are products and beneficiaries of the American university system.

2. Student protesters tend to be highly competent academically. The movement began among students at the most selective colleges and universities; the most continuous movement activity tends to be concentrated at such schools, national movement leaders tend to be students educated at such schools. Moreover, most studies indicate that activists tend to be above average academically, with very few recruited from among those with low grade point averages.

3. Studies utilizing the "Omnibus Personality Inventory" or other personality measures standardized for college populations, indicate that the profiles of activists resemble those typically found for intellectually serious, academically superior students. The central interests of activists from early adolescence onward have been primarily intellectual and aesthetic.

4. Although activists tend to be ambivalent toward or repelled by conventional career patterns, there is one institutionalized career which is mentioned by a large proportion of activists, namely, the academic. For example, fully one-half of a random sample of students who had taken control of the Administration Building at the University of Chicago said that they were interested in academic careers. This was twice the proportion found for a sample of non-participants in the sit-in.

The popular stereotype which is shared by many faculty members is that student protesters are a "fringe" or "drop-out" element profoundly alienated from the academy and from intellectualism in general. The data show quite

conclusively, however, that the activist is typically a person who comes from a family in which education and intellectuality are central values, who was academically serious and outstanding in high school, who is strongly intellectual in interests and life-style, who came to college with a strong intrinsic interest in education, and who aspires to a life as a scholar, a teacher, or an intellectual.

Most of these studies do not focus solely on SDS members; for example, a good deal of the data I have just summarized is based on studies of participants in the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley. But all our research indicates that SDS members do not differ in these respects from other highly committed activists with other organizational memberships. Moreover, our data at the University of Chicago suggest that SDS members more homogeneously possess the characteristics just listed than do less committed students on the periphery of the movement.[4] It seems safe to say that when we are talking about SDS members we are talking about young people who come out of the educated middle class, who are representative of the "intellectual" and "academic" subcultures on high school and college campuses--people who are, by virtue of early socialization and later inclination, more emotionally engaged with the university than the mass of college students are likely to be. Another way to look at these data: if you were a college administrator who wanted to screeen out students who would be most likely to be recruited to SDS, the most efficient way to do so would be to refuse admission to students at the top of their high school class, whose parents are college graduates, who do a lot of outside reading, who have high verbal SAT scores, and who say they want to be scholars and teachers. The student body you would then get would be a very infertile soil for growth of an SDS chapter. If SDS consists of nihilists bent on destroying the university, then the

fact must be faced that those students who are most hostile to the university today are also, by any standard, among those who were most prepared to accept its values as their own.

The question I want to try to confront is this: how is it that radical students who, in this country and in this time, happen to be people with strong commitments to intellectual life and education--how did these people come to identify the university system as a major target for direct action and disruption? As I have suggested, it cannot be maintained that SDS members are marginal "misfits" who by some misfortune have accidentally found their way into the student body. Whether one considers their aptitudes, their academic history, their interests, their values--by any criterion they belong in the university if anyone does. Why then this intense disaffection? And are they really nihilists?

To begin to answer these questions we need some history. The student movement of the Sixties has some of its roots in the student generation of the Fifties. Underneath the general blandness and privatism of that generation could be observed on any major campus a rather substantial subculture of intellectual, non-conforming students who were considerably alienated from the crewcut, collegiate life-style which seemed to prevail. The student intellectuals were rarely political although the youth groups of the various radical sects did have some members during that period. It should be remembered, however, that as the Fifties drew to a close, many intellectual students were attracted by the cultural disaffiliation popularized by "beat" writers and poets. If there was an enemy it was middle class conformism and the anti-intellectualism of the "square" majority. At Berkeley, however, the intellectual subculture did begin to have a

substantial political thrust during the late fifties; probably the first harbinger of a new student politics was the formation in 1958 of SLATE political party on the Berkeley campus out of a concern for such issues as the right of students to invite controversial speakers to campus, compulsory ROTC, and civil liberties. By 1960 Berkeley students had engaged in demonstrations at the execution of Caryl Chessman against capital punishment and at the hearings of the House Unamerican Activities Committee. Meanwhile in February 1960, small groups of Negro students in the South were taking direct action against segregation in public accommodations in the form of: lunch-counter "sit-ins." These actions had a surprisingly galvanizing effect on groups of white students at Northern campuses. In a very short time five-and-dime chain stores across the country were being picketed in sympathy with the Southern sit-ins. These sympathy pickets represent the first nationwide expression of what eventually became the new student movement. That movement was further inspired by the fact that students elsewhere in the world--for example, in Korea, Turkey and Japan--were engaged in massive and tumultuous demonstrations which in some cases led to the fall of governments. Further impetus to the growth of student political consciousness throughout the country developed in response to the California student demonstrations against HUAC--these received intensive publicity as a result of a film made by the Committee which intended to dramatize the nefarious influence of communism in the minds of youth, but which actually dramatized to many students that demonstrations and direct action could have positive effect in challenging unjust and immoral authorities and policies.

-4-

As the Freedom movement spread in the South, so did a Northern movement of support. Hundreds went South to help in the struggle while in the North various forms of sympathy actions were organized. By late 1961, a new development in the movement had begun to spread: the use of pickets, marches and vigils to protest nuclear testing, civil defense and other aspects of foreign policy. Many of the same pacifist individuals and groups that had helped the civil rights movement acquire the tactic of non-violent direct action, now found recruits among students for similar tactics on other issues.

It did not take long for small groups of highly intellectual students to perceive that the various ad hoc protest activities that were emerging were inter-connected. They were connected, first, because many of the same students who marched for peace were also picketing for civil rights. They were tactically interconnected--that is, young people "putting their bodies on the line" could have dramatic effects not only with respect to specific injustices, but also on the pervasive climate of apathy which permitted the injustices to continue. They were politically interconnected--the same conservative politicians who blocked civil rights legislation were also those who were blocking a nuclear test ban and pushing for a bigger arms-race. There began to emerge then a feeling that students as activists could do more than portest particular moral outrages, they could help catalyze a general movement for political and social reform.

The thrust toward politicization was shaped to a large degree by the appearance in the late Fifties and early Sixties of a new radical social criticism. The most influential American critic was C. Wright Mills whose work on the power elite, the cold war and the decline of democracy

substantially aided the student intellectuals in developing their own social analysis. By 1962 a number of little magazines had begun to publish espousing the need for a new radical ideology and critically examining the classic doctrines of radicalism, while in England, university-base intellectuals had formed what they were calling a "new left" which aimed to regenerate socialist thought by breaking with communist and social democratic orthodoxy.

Among the multiplicy of groups which formed during this period was the Students for a Democratic Society. Its founders included Southern and Northern white students who had become highly committed to civil rights, student governement leaders and campus editors who had begun to envision the reforming possibilities of activist students, students who had organized marches and seminars on disarmament and nuclear testing, graduate student intellectuals in touch with the "new left" social criticism coming out of England, Eastern Europe, a few American centers, and a sprinkling of young people who had been active in the traditional left-wing youth groups who had become disaffected with them. These people had in common a sense that the country needed an organized left opposition, that a potential for this was present in the civil rights and anti-war activity, that students could play a catalytic role in its development, and that action although essential for creating movement and change was not enough--in addition there had to be a self-conscious development of political analysis, theory and program if actions against specific injustices were to be blended into a general movement for social reconstruction.

From the beginning SDS' central purpose was the development of this

kind of social movement. Although its founders and members were students, their primary concern was not with student issues as such. Rather, they were interested in seeing whether students in their role as students could become effective agents of social change in the larger society.

But this kind of concern, naturally enough, necessitates some view of the relationship between activist students and the university which houses them.

The earliest writings of SDS leaders contain critiques of the university--and despite the many changes in the organization which have occurred over the intervening sex years, these early statements are still valid expressions of the current SDS criticism of the American university. For example, here is Tom Hayden in a memorandum to other "founders" written in March, 1962:

> Strangely, we are in the universities but gain little enlightenment there--the old promise that knowledge and increased rationality would liberate society seems hollow, if not a lie. Our most educated men, the professors and administrators, sacrifice controversy to public relations; their curriculums change more slowly than the living events of the world; their skills and silence are purchased by the makers of war; passion is thought unscholarly; the intellectuals are consumed more and more in the quest for evidence that is value-free! The questions a man wants raised--what is really important? Can we live better than this? How should we be as people?--are not questions of an empirical, fruitful nature.[5]

What is expressed here is emerging <u>disillusionment</u> with the the university. We expected it to be a place of controversy, a center for promoting human liberation through the exercise of reason, a home for those who seek answers to the basic questions of life. Instead, these purposes which we understood to be the basic ones are subverted by a concern for safety and security, by financial considerations and public relations.

In addition to their disillusionment with the irrelevance and corruption of higher education, the early SDS leaders were disturbed by the undemocratic character of university life. To a large extent, this concern derived from their more general commitment to radical democracy. This is not the place for an extended discussion of the roots of SDS' fixation on "participatory democracy." Suffice it to say, however, that the concept of a "democracy of participation" was extremely important in crystallizing the new left's social criticism and vision. It provided a way of unifying conceptually the diverse issues which had become foci of action. It helped make intelligible the widespread feelings of impotence and fears about the future of freedom in technological society. It was crucial in the development of a criticism which could encompass both the communist regimes of the East and the formal democracies of the West. It was decisive in helping the new left articulate its disagreement with the doctrines of the old left, and yet the idea of "participatory democracy" seemed to represent a convergence of classic radical positions: socialism, pacifism, anarchism, syndicalism. In short, by espousing radical democracy as an ideal, new leftists became able to explain to themselves and others why simple, short-run reform was unsatisfactory, while at the same time they could advocate a radical reconstruction of the society without committing themselves to the outdated or imported revolutionary doctrines of previous eras.

At any rate, with this kind of vision, again in the words of Tom Hayden, "a special consideration for SDS, of course, is that of importing democratic ideas into the university experience...What are the decisive elements in the structure and activity of the university and who regulates

them? These surely include: content of curriculum, academic requirements, opportunity for free inquiry, non-academic living and working conditions. Generally these conditions are governed undemocratically: by authoritarian fiat of administration, and occasionally with faculty participation."[6] On the basis of their commitment to the democratic ideal, early SDS documents attack the concept of in loco parentis, of rule by a specialized group of administrators, of restrictions on students' freedom of expression, of "sandbox" student government, of hierarchical relations in the classroom.

Thus at its founding, SDS as part of its general social criticism, laid down two general themes of opposition to the existing university--its irrelevance to fundamental and urgent human problems; its undemocratic internal structure--which continue to this day to animate student protest on the campus.

At the same time, however, the early SDS position included some relatively positive attitudes toward the university. Although the existing university atmosphere was stifling and did little to counteract the prevailing privatism and apathy of the mass of students, it was recognized that the university was more open and more committed to intellectual values than other social institutions. Consequently, the academic community could become a positive resource for those interested in social change. The very fact that the national elites required the knowledge produced in the university made it, furthermore, an important center of social influence. The Port Huron Statement, SDS' manifesto, issued in June 1962, argues that the major potential for reform in the society will come from the civil rights, peace and labor movements. But, it goes on to add, these movements must come together around a common program--a new left is needed in America to "reinsert theory and idealism" into the struggle

change. Such a new left can and must be built at the university. Here are some of the reasons for such a university-based radicalism as listed in that manifesto:

> Any new left in America must be, in large measure, a left with real intellectual skills, committed to deliberativeness, honesty, reflection as working tools. The university permits the political life to be an adjunct to the academic one, and action to be informed by reason. A new left must include liberals and socialists, the former for their relevance, the latter for their sense of thoroughgoing reforms in the system. The university is a more sensible place than a political party for these two traditions to begin to discuss their differences and look for political syntheses. A new left must start controvery across the land if national policies and national apathy are to be reversed. The ideal university is a community of controversy, within itself and in its effects on communities beyond. A new left must transform modern complexity into issues that can be understood and felt close-up by every human being. It must give form to the feelings of helplessness...so that people may see the ... sources of their private troubles and organize to change society...the new left cannot rely on only aching stomachs to be the engine force of social reform. The case for change... must be argued as never before. The university is a relevant place for all of these activities.[7]

The statement calls upon students and faculty to undertake these activities on their campuses and simultaneously to connect up to the civil rights, peace and labor struggles in the larger society. It concludes that the achievement of a real movement must "involve national efforts at university reform by an alliance of students and faculty. They must wrest control of the educational process from the administrative bureaucracy...They must import major public issues into the curriculum... They must make debate and controversy, not dull pedantic cant, the common style for educational life. They must consciously build a base for their assault upon the loci of power."

Thus, in its first stage, SDS' program with respect to the university involved the following aims: First, to stimulate controversy and arouse concern over pressing social issues. Second, to recruit students and faculty for participation in off-campus activity, especially concerning civil rights and disarmament. Third, to attack restrictions within the university on freedom of discussion and off-campus action. Fourth, to protest institutional practices, such as fraternity or housing discrimination which promoted segregation, or practices which involved interference with individual freedom such as compulsory ROTC or regulation of student social life. Fifth, to work with faculty to change the curriculum so that pressing social problems, especially disarmament and race, could be studied and debated within the context of normal educational activity.

In large measure, it was a program to shatter student apathy and political ignorance and to counteract those features of the university system which reinforced that apathy and ignorance. In addition, it was a program to recruit young intellectuals to the task of building a radical movement. And significantly, despite the awareness of SDSers of the power of civil disobedience and direct action as tactics for change, there was no suggestion in these early years that such techniques could be used for change on the campus. The primary method of change was to be the formation of SDS chapters which would serve as centers of controversy and education, run candidates for student government, and conduct action programs in support of civil rights and peace.

It did not take very long before this program of university reform and organization began to appear less and less relevant for SDS. For

one thing, there were persistent theoretical objections within the organization to the idea that significant changes could be made in the university prior to social reorganization in the larger society. How could, for example, the university become a center of controversy while its purse-strings were controlled by the state and the corporations? But more fundamentally challenging to the original SDS posture was the pull toward action in the "real world" exerted by the example of SNCC and other black youth who were actually committing their lives to the struggle for change. In the moral environment created by SNCC's drive to confront Southern racism, SDS' program of campus debate, student elections and criticism of the dean of women, seemed dangerously irrelevant.

A year after the Port Huron Statement, SDS began to move into action off the campus. In emulation of SNCC, SDS undertook sponsorship of full-time workers in poverty areas. While SNCC's main efforts were directed at building political organization among Southern rural Negroes, SDS contemplated similar efforts in Northern ghettoes and among poor whites in Appalachia and urban areas. Increasingly, SDS leaders were wont to argue that students should get off the campus, if necessary drop out of school, that real education was best obtainable in the midst of the freedom struggle. By the summer of 1964, SDS had recruited several hundred students for work in Appalachia and nine urban slum neighborhoods. In addition, scores of other SDSers went to Mississippi for the summer while a number of others took part in union organizing and in a variety of political campaigns. The main on-campus activity for SDS in this new phase involved recruitment for off-campus action and organizing support for the hundreds of young people who stayed on in the South and the North after the summer.

In their first phase, SDS spokemen often spoke in ideal terms about the possibilities of the university. Thus, Tom Hayden, in a widely reprinted speech, declared that the "main and transcending concern of the university must be the unfolding of the moral, aesthetic and logical capacities of men in a manner that creates genuine independence."[8] In their rhetoric, there was often expressed the hope that the university could be their authentic and lasting home.

In the second phase, however, a process of demystification of the university began to set in and one finds SDS leaders arguing in the words of Paul Potter that "the home we've been looking for is in the university and the home the intellectual is finding is in social movements, in political action and agitation." In the same speech, Potter said that "the community of scholars is drifting into the archives of the library...we have to replace it...with a community of people: a community which includes not only scholars but workers and housewives and individuals from all walks of life who will, I hope, make up the kind of community in which there are much more attractive and meaningful alternatives to that once-heralded situation."[9]

There were, nevertheless, severe problems in SDS' new emphasis on leaving the campus. For one thing it became clear rather quickly that most students who wanted to engage in mobilization of the poor were rather unsuited to the task. This was particularly obvious for white students in black communities but turned out to be true also for the white students who went to live in Appalachia or in poor white settlements in Chicago or Cleveland. Second, after the Mississippi Summer and similar experiences, white students were explicitly made

unwelcome by SNCC and other civil rights groups. Third, the threat of the draft and financial strain kept down the number of students who could easily be freed for off-campus work.

But just as these factors began to make themselves felt, a new element was added to the political scene--the escalation of the war in Vietnam. Even before the bombing of North Vietnam began, SDS had decided to shift its resources from concentration on race and poverty to organizing protest against the war. Thus, shortly after the escalation in the Spring of 1965, SDS was in a position to organize the first national demonstration against the war--the April March on Washington.

This turned out to be the largest single protest activity organized by the contemporary student movement up to that time. Until that march it should be remembered that SDS was not an especially sizable organization. A number of other student groups, including various Marxist organizations, and civil rights and peace groups, competed with SDS for membership and resources. Thus, in the Fall of 1964, SDS had about 25 functioning chapters and perhaps one thousand members. The Vietnam March, however, changed the entire organizational scene on the campus. SDS, as a result of having organized the first major protest against the war, became widely publicized and recognized as <u>the</u> legitimate national organization of the student new left. By the end of the school year, there were probably 150 chapters and more than 5000 paid members.

The war protest then represented still another phase of SDS' development. Its focus was still off the campus, but its concern was less with mobilization of the poor than with the development of an effective movement to stop the war. In a short time, SDS began to develop programs

aimed at disrupting the Selective Service System and creating local community-based opposition to the war. Probably the major on-campus activity for SDS in this period involved the "teach-in" movement which had been sparked by faculty members sympathetic to SDS at the University of Michigan and which spread rapidly across the country.

During the same months that SDS was generating protest against the war in Vietnam, the Berkeley campus was exploding. SDS had virtually no organizational presence at Berkeley--indeed, it was barely heard of by FSM activists. The impact of Berkeley on SDS was at first rather slight. SDS organized sympathy demonstrations for FSM on various campuses and as the year wore on, contacts between Berkeley leaders and SDS began to develop.

One significance of Berkeley, for our purposes here, was that it was the most dramatic, if not the first, instance of use by students of direct action to achieve change on the campus. Before Berkeley, student protests on the campus were, on the whole, limited to petitions, rallies, pickets and an occasional strike. But conscious efforts to disrupt university functioning were quite rare and one can search SDS literature in vain for any advocacy of it up to that point.

Berkeley, then, provided a crucial model for future campus revolt, but it took SDS quite a while to assimilate it as such. This was in part due to the fact that SDS activists knew that the Berkeley uprising had developed spontaneously around a very clear-cut and somewhat localized issue, and that the student movement at Berkeley had a wider base of support than at any other major school. Perhaps more important, SDS at this time was focussed off the campus and could see little relevance in on-campus confrontations.

The main immediate impact of Berkeley was less the drama of confrontation

than the experimental attitude toward education which, according to Lagemf, was present during the long night at Sproul Hall and in the months that followed that sit-in. This attitude converged with the experience of many in the Freedom Schools in the South and the teach-ins. What all these experiences had in common was the idea of education as a process of free discussion of genuinely relevant issues in an atmosphere of equality and authentic search for answers. This experience was so exhilarating that SDS and other groups tried to institutionalize it in the so-called Free Universities. These were seen by some as an exciting way to expose students to radical ideas by others as a "counter-institution" to the university which could challenge the established curriculum and structure by offering alternative models and by drawing students' energy away from the conventional system and toward a new "parallel" one.

The full story of the free universities remains to be written; suffice it to say that although a number of SDS members and chapters became involved in such projects, SDS as an organization never became very committed to sponsoring the idea.

Indeed, by the Fall of 1965, SDS had reached a major crisis of strategy. It could have maintained the dominance of the anti-Vietnam movements, but it consciously chose not to. For one thing, SDSers were strongly imbued with the idea that concentration on a single issue was a diversion from the main task of building a radical movement. Second, SDS by and large was agreed that mere protest was not going to end the war, especially mass demonstrations in Washington. But blocked from alliance with the black movement, disillusioned with university reform as a central purpose, SDS was torn with discussion about what its course should be. Some advocated a strategy of local organization and education against

the war. Others favored a militant program encouraging opposition to the draft. Still others wanted SDS to abandon its student character and become a general organization for radicals with a political strategy for national action.

Once again external political events clarified the situation for SDS. In this case the deus ex machina was General Hershey who announced that students would shortly be drafted for the war, and that draft call-ups would be based on students' standings in their class as well as scores on a nationwide test. SDS, nationally, prepared its own test containing multiple choice questions on the war and organized to distribute these at hundreds of testing centers. But in the meantime at several campuses, notably Chicago and Columbia, SDS chapters began to protest the fact that universities were to comply with draft board requests for information about students' class standings. SDS argued that this in effect turned professors into adjuncts of the Selective Service System and that the university was being made an accomplice to the war and to a system of deferments which pitted students against each other to save their own skins. At a few places university administrations or faculties agreed not to transmit class rank information to Selective Service. But at Chicago the faculty and administration refused SDS' demand that a decision about compliance be postponed until the community as a whole could discuss the issue and students could take part in making the final decision about compliance. SDS then called for a sit-in at the Administration Building which led to its seizure by several hundred students for three and a half days. It was the first instance, to my knowledge, of American students successfully shutting down a University administration building and the first time that SDS had

undertaken a direct confrontation with a university administration. A wave of similar actions occurred in response to the Chicago sit-in. The Chicago sit-in did not elicit punitive action by the University administration, nor did it have an immediate effect on University policy (though a year later the faculty council finally agreed not to transmit "male class ranks" to draft boards--somewhat irrelevantly since class ranks were no longer to be used by the boards; also the following year 56 students were suspended after participating in an abortive and non-disruptive sit-in). But the "anti-ranking" actions on various campuses did help spark a nation-wide debate on the draft and did help popularize the concept of refusing to cooperate with the draft as a means of resisting the war. And these sit-ins provoked a new strategic orientation for SDS, one that resulted in a return to on-campus action as a basic thrust for the organization.

This new, and still on-going phase in SDS development, was inaugurated at an SDS convention in June, 1966. At that meeting a virtually new leadership was swept into office; for the first time since its formation SDS was to be run largely by people without ties to the original founding group. The "new guard" came into office with a rather explicit program. They opposed the conversion of SDS into a general political organization or an anti-war movement. They also opposed what they perceived as a trend toward greater centralization of decision-making in the organization. Instead, they advocated and implemented a program concentrating on the organization of campus chapters with an emphasis on issues directly affecting the lives of students. Carl Davidson, the new vice-president, called the new thrust "a student syndicalist movement". If, he argued, SDS' central vision was participatory democracy, then its main task was to help educate students so that throughout their lives they will struggle for active participation.

The best way to so teach them is to engage with them in struggle where they are for control of their immediate environment. Moreover, he asserted, the universities were major agencies for "social change in the direction of 1984." The universities not only produce the knowledge which enables the corporate state to expand, in addition, they mold students into bureaucratic men--men who can "create, sustain, tolerate and ignore situations like Watts, Mississippi and Vietnam." "What would happen," he asked, "to a manipulative society if its means of creating manipulable people were done away with? We might then have a fighting change to change the system!" Thus a campaign to democratize the university through organization for "student control" could disrupt the trend toward 1984, while students learned to become active initiators of change. Davidson proposed, in particular, the formation of campus political parties and student unions and suggested as their immediate goal action to abolish the grading system and achieve student participation in shaping the curriculum.

10

Since SDS rarely adopts formal policies, Davidson's specific proposals were never official doctrine for SDS. But as SDS sent its traveling organizers out across the country, various forms of "student syndicalist" activity did emerge. For instance, on a number of campuses, SDS leaders were elected as student body presidents only to resign in protest against the ineffectuality of student government. Somehow or other, the slogan of "student power" gained currency (I am not sure where it originated although it is, of course, an adaptation of "black power"). Across the country there was an increasing tempo of demands for liberalization of dorm rules, of the grading system, for free speech, and the like.

But the tension within SDS--between pursuing general radical goals as against organizing students for university reform--tended to persist

and was certainly heightened as the war continued to escalate and the black rebellion intensified. Then in December, 1966, SDS members at Berkeley tried to set up an anti-draft literature table next to a Navy recruiting table in the Student Union. A massive sit-in and student strike ensued as a result of the Administration's attempt to eject the SDS group from the Student Union. The following month at Brown University, SDS members organized the first protest against Dow Chemical Company recruiters. During the Spring of 1967, scores of demonstrations and sit-ins occurred protesting the presence of military and Dow recruiters on the campus. At Columbia SDS and its followers engaged in physical battle with other students as a result of their protests against Marine recruiters.

As it turned out, the anti-rank sit-ins of the previous year and the anti-recruiter demonstrations of 1967, provided a way for SDS to effectively resolve the ideological tensions experienced by most of its student members. The significance of these demonstrations was perhaps first noted by Todd Gitlin, a former SDS president, who suggested that these demonstrations could stimulate a broad campaign to "drive the military off the campus". To the extent that the military needed the university to supply it with research and high-level manpower, students could have a disruptive effect on the military machine by chopping away at its tentacles as they extended onto the campus. Such efforts could have important political effects and, in the long run, they helped weaken the forces that were driving the country toward a garrison state.[11]

This perspective was rapidly and widely adopted within the organization. During the Summer of 1967, many SDS members engaged in research on the [illegible] concrete manifestations of militarism on American campuses. Earlier revelations about Michigan State's participation in counter-insurgency

and Penn State's acceptance of germ warfare contracts suggested a widespread involvement by universities in research which directly aided the war effort and helped the government prepare for future Vietnams. And, indeed, SDS researchers found such involvement. Among the most dramatic instances was the sponsorship by twelve prestigious universities of the Institute for Defense Analysis whose primary function was to coopt academicians into weapons and counter-insurgency research, including work on suppression of urban disorder within the US. SDS chapters at several of these universities agreed on a campaign to get their universities to withdraw from IDA. During the Fall of 1967, SDS and other groups initiated several score demonstrations against military recruiters; the final culmination of what came to be called "institutional resistance" was, of course, the Columbia rebellion of April 1968, sparked in part by SDS' demand that the University withdraw from IDA.

I have recounted this bit of history in order to be able to establish a number of points about SDS and, consequently, about the campus revolt.

First, the history of SDS' relationship to the university indicates quite clearly that student radicalism did not begin, nor did it have as its major thrust, an attack on the university system. SDS activists have primarily been young people who aspire to lead the life of intellectuals. Their central urge is to have the freedom to confront ultimate values, to be authentically themselves, to be of some genuine use to others. Because they are more political than others of their generation and class, they also seek the same independence and freedom for every man. To a very great extent these aspirations are a consequence of the influence of higher education on the fathers and mothers of activists, an influence which the parents quite consciously transmitted to their offspring. It is clear that most of these

young people started their university careers with extraordinary hopes for the university as the place where one could learn to live the life of a serious intellectual. They expected it to be a center for social criticism. They expected it to be relatively free of the corruptions which permeate the rest of the society. They expected their professors to be exemplary models of the intellectual life, they expected to be treated as full-fledged persons and not as children. To a considerable degree, the current "alienation" of SDS activists from the university is a direct consequence of their earlier hopes for it and the steady undermining of these hopes by the patterened practices of those who run the universities.

There is a strong tendency for psychologists and social scientists generally to attempt to reduce protest and other forms of rebellion to their roots in individual character and unconscious motivation. In doing this, we frequently are unwilling to take at face value the reasons political actors provide for their own behavior. With respect to student protest, college administrators are quite eager to copy social scientists in this respect and like social scientists they typically deny that the demands and rhetoric emanating from the student movement represent the "real" causes or issues.

I should like to suggest that although the student movement undoubtedly has roots in early socialization and may be seen as an expression of various kinds of "guilts" and "alienations" experienced by its members, the actual history of SDS indicates that the concrete attitudes, beliefs, strategies and tactics of the movement cannot be explained away by reference to underlying character traits. SDS, to repeat, did not start with an interest in disruption or with a deeply hostile perception of the university. Its present position has evolved over the past six years and is a direct outgrowth of the experience of political students in the university and the society

at large. Moreover, the current positions of SDS are not simply impulsive reactions to immediate experiences, but are the consequence of very serious and deliberate efforts to rationally assimilate that experience and to shape it so that it can be used for effective political action. For, aside from the individual origins of SDS members and their personal histories, the most important single point to understand about them is their political seriousness--their determination to construct a grass-roots radicalism in America that has real political effect. The shifts and turns in SDS' policies and perspectives are the result of systematic and intensive efforts to resolve quite clearly defined political problems. Such problems include: what is the best way to stop the onrush of militarism in America? How can American efforts to dominate peoples around the world be disrupted? What moral and political response is most appropriate for white radicals to make to the ghetto rebellions? If 1984 is a real possibility for a society like this, how can the drift toward it be reversed? What is the proper relationship between intellectual and political activity? How can unarmed and unwealthy minorities actually achieve some power in a society of this type?

For a while, I think SDS had some hope that the university would be a place which welcomed the serious study and discussion of these issues. Throughout its history I think the new left has felt skeptical of actually achieving some ideal version of the university but hoped that it would at least be a major resource in the effort to transform the larger society. This was particularly true during the period of greatest involvement in the civil rights and poverty movements.

The Berkeley revolt of 1964 marked the beginning of a changing attitude toward the university. Here was a major institution revealed not only as inhospitable to the intellectual concerns of the students but as positively

working to restrict and repress their political activity. Moreover, the concept of the multiversity, articulated by the President of the institutions, suggested a deliberate policy of service to the established order coupled with neglect of education as such. Finally, Berkeley demonstrated that students could use the techniques of direct action developed by the civil rights movement in their own behalf, they could win victories in this way and they could substantially shake the political structure of the larger society in the process.

As I have suggested, it took a while for SDS to fully assimilate these lessons. What finally turned SDS into an angry oppositional force on the campus was the continued complicity of universities with the war effort and militarism in general. This fact was dramatized by the "anti-rank" sit-ins and by the subsequent controversy over military recruiters on the campus. These events fundamentally changed SDS perceptions of the university. Once seen as a possibly pluralist institution which might lend some support to radical projects, the university was now perceived as enemy territory by an increasing number of activists. An attack on university complicity with militarism and racism became a necessary and crucial element for any student movement with serious political intentions. Moreover, to the surprise of activists, such attacks did not have merely local consequences; as Berkeley, Wisconsin, Chicago and Columbia have demonstrated, uprisings on particular campuses can have global repercussions.

My point is that SDS returned to the campus after a long hiatus for two reasons: first, it finally became clear that the effort to reform the university could be directly relevant to the general task of reconstructing the society. Second, and more important, university authorities made the confrontation necessary by actively aiding the institutions and forces in

the society which the SDSers regarded as most illegitimate and most dangerous to their personal futures and to the future of the whole world. Moreover, the provision of aid and comfort to the military machine, the willingness by many urban universities to exploit the ghetto for narrow institutional purposes was conducted behind a rhetoric of "neutrality" and "non partisanship" which was employed every time the students asked for university action in behalf of their interests.

Where is "student power" in all of this? My own feeling is that the demand for student voice in university governance is not the primary one for student radicals. Indeed, SDS spokesmen have repeatedly expressed doubts about making this objective their central one. The demand for democratization is, of course, a constant theme in SDS' history--though this has usually been defined as <u>faculty</u>-student control. But SDS has always warned against the pursuit of university reform in isolation from the larger movements for change in the society. The student radicals do not want to end up as a special elite, pursuing new privileges within their own institutions while the rest of the society continues to suffer various forms of subjugation. Instead, student power is pursued by student radicals in the hope that given direct voice in university governance, students would begin to halt the drift toward the multiversity and the linking of the university to the American empire. In addition, as we have seen, SDSers have felt that the struggle by students to end restrictions on their freedom and to win full citizenship in the university would be highly educative; it would be a way of preparing many students for a lifetime effort to transform authority and achieve personal liberation. It thus seems clear that student radicals will not accept procedural reforms of the university; the kinds of reforms which will permit them to participate in the further subversion of the university for imperialist, racist or bureaucratic ends.

Many SDSers have experienced a total disillusionment with the university. Quite a few have given up earlier aspirations to take on university careers; a great many have dropped out altogether. Meanwhile, however, numerous radicals and humanists continue to work within the university as graduate students, professors, and researchers. Many of these are "graduates" of SDS, others are older folk who have been moved by the times and their students. Presumably, these people still have some hope for a reformed university, else we would not continue to spend our lives within it. Indeed, last March, some 350 academics met in Chicago to create a new organization for faculty and graduate student radicals called the "New University Conference." Perhaps the hope of this organization--to catalyze a movement for fundamental reform of higher education--is built on an illusion; presumably some student radicals would say so, surely many in authority mean to show that this is so. Still, the emergence of this group could be significant, especially if it means that a permanent radical force will stay committed to changing the university system, developing in the process a theory of the university and a strategy and program for its transformation.

To conclude. What I have been trying to argue is that the new left, as represented by SDS, did not arise primarily because of conditions at universities nor is its principal aim the disruption of them. Indeed, student radicals are typically quite skeptical about the worth of staying on the campus and SDS has had long periods of indifference to university affairs. But the university had a chance to win the allegiance of student radicals and instead has convinced many of them that it is enemy territory. The grim possibility that academic humanists have to face is that these students may be right. If we wish to prove otherwise, however, we would do well to cease trying to work compromises with the authorities and start

striving in a thoroughly committed way for the university of our ideals.

In the process we will have to decide just who is bent on destroying the authentic university. Is it the student left which intends to drive the war effort off the campus, or could it be a man like Grayson Kirk who invited it on? Is it the student radicals who want to stop the multiversity, or someone like Clark Kerr who defined it and declared it inevitable. And if "student power" turns you off, what does "trustee power" do for you?

The answer to the crisis in the university does not lie in repression of student radicals, nor simply in procedural reform, nor in curricular gimmickry. The one real hope for a university that can command the allegiance of the politically serious youth is a politically serious faculty working in fraternal alliance with them, against those who do not feel criminal when they let their institutions serve the ends of international empire and domestic colonialism.

1. M. Cohen and D. Hale The New Student Left, Boston, Beacon Press, 1966, pp. 1-2.

2. Cf. Flacks, "The Liberated Generation," Journal of Social Issues, XXIII, 3, (1967), pp. 52-75.

3. Cf. Flacks, op. cit., R. C. Braungart, "SDS and YAF: Backgrounds of Student Political Activists", Pennsylvania State University, 1966 (mimeo); Block, J., Haan, N., Smith, M.B. "Activism and Apathy in Contemporary Adolescence", in J. F. Adams, (ed.) Contributions to the Understanding of Adolescence, New York: Allyn and Bacon, 1966; J. Kats, The Student Activists: Rights, Needs and Powers of Undergraduates, Stanford Institute for the Study of Human Problems, 1967.

4. Weisking, C. "Students Against the Book", M.A. paper, University of Chicago, 1967.

5. Students for a Democratic Society, Convention Document #1, March 19, 1962.

6. Ibid.

7. SDS, Port Huron Statement, New York, 1964, pp. 61-63.

8. Hayden, T. "Student-Social Action" M. Cohen and D. Hale, op. cit., p. 282.

9. Potter, P. "The Intellectual and Social Change" in Ibid., pp. 16-22.

10. Davidson, C. "A Student Syndicalist Movement", New Left Notes, September 9, 1966, p. 2. Cf. also Davidson, C. "Toward Institutional Resistance", New Left Notes, November 13, 1967, p. 2.

11. Gitlin, T. "Resistance and the Movement", New Left Notes, March 20, 1967.